

# **CONSERVATION@HOME**

shaping private and community landscapes in a conservation-minded way <u>extension.illinois.edu/fmpt/conservationhome</u>



#### FALL

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As the days are getting shorter and the weather is cooling, we realize that we are coming to the end of another growing season in Illinois. Soon we will see the plants in our landscapes changing to prepare for the days ahead. Where there were once flowers we now see seeds maturing to the promise of new plants next season. Packed with nutrition for those new plants, they are also a important food source for migrating birds and wildlife preparing for winter.

We will also start to see leaves changing color. The trees are shutting down photosynthesis and dropping leaves to prepare for the long winter months.

These survival strategies allow the trees to survive during a time when little energy is produced. It is important that landscapes are still providing resources for pollinators, birds and other wildlife. Asters, goldenrod, and obedient plant are a lovely addition to a native plant bed to ensure pollen and nectar are available for animals to prepare for the long months of cold weather.

As you think of fall clean up of your yard, consider leaving your perennials standing. Hollow stems provide nesting site for native bees, the seeds provide food for wildlife, and it adds visual interest to the landscape in the winter. Leaving your leaves is another step you can take to provide habitat for overwintering creatures.

Enjoy this time of year, as we see the culmination of the productive growing season.



### **FALL BLOOMERS IN THE GARDEN**

#### **ILRIVER HORT BLOG**

Adding flowers that bloom later in the season provides resources to pollinators into the fall. As they prepare for migration or overwintering, this is a critical season to ensure they have the required resources. Native plants are an excellent way to ensure that the blooms have the necessary pollen and nectar available at the right time.



## NATIVE FALL BLOOMING PERENNIALS

New England Aster
Aromatic Aster
Sky-Blue Aster
Smooth Blue Aster
Short's Aster

White Wood Aster
Showy goldenrod
Rough Blazing Star
Obedient Plant
Rose Turtlehead



# FALL GARDEN CLEAN UP WITH POLLINATORS AND OTHER WILDLIFE IN MIND

#### KEN JOHNSON, GOOD GROWING BLOG

As the days get shorter and cooler, the gardening season starts to wind down, and many of us will begin cleaning up our landscapes for the winter. While cutting back dead plants and raking leaves can make for a clean-looking yard, it may not be the best thing for pollinators and other wildlife that inhabit our landscapes. So, how should we approach garden clean-up in the fall?



## NATIVE PLANT PROFILE

## **SHOWY GOLDENROD**

#### UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION: ILLINOIS POLLINATORS

Solidago speciosa

One of the signs that fall is coming is blooming goldenrod. Goldenrod is a favorite of pollinators and its flowers are often abuzz with bees and beetles.

Showy goldenrod is an herbaceous perennial that thrives in zone 3 to 8. This native perennial can grow to be between 2 to 5 feet tall and spreads about 2 to 3 feet.

Plant in a space with full sun to partial shade for the best flowering. Because it has a fibrous root system as well as rhizomes, this species spreads slower (vegetatively) than other goldenrods.

Showy goldenrod prefers medium or well drained soil.

Golden-yellow flowers bloom in August, September and October. Leaves and stems can turn red in the fall.

Plant as a plug, divide an existing plant, or start from seed after cold, moist stratification for 60 days. Seeds need light to germinate.

Showier blooms than other goldenrods. Looks great when planted with fall-blooming purple asters.

For more information on Wild Bergamot check out these articles:

- Goldenrod and asters are the stars of fall by Ryan Pankau
- Roadside weed or beckoning torch?
   from Flowers, Fruits and Frass









## WELCOME TO NEW CONSERVATION@HOME MEMBERS

















#### NOW THAT YOUR YARD IS CERTIFIED

An attractive and functional yard that conserves water and provides habitat for birds, butterflies and other beneficial wildlife deserves some recognition! Your certified yard is an environmentally-friendly landscape through the Conservation@Home program and you have a sign to post proudly. When your neighbors see your sign and get curious, they will want to know how they can get a sign like that. Before you know it, yard by yard, you've brought more nature to your neighborhood.

We would love to see the Conservation@Home sign in your yard. Place your sign in a visible place on a t-post or sturdy wooden stake then get a picture. If you need assistance with getting your sign posted, please let us know. Once you have your picture, we would love it if you would send it our way (email is usually the best and easiest way).



#### **SUPPORT MIGRATING BIRDS**

During the autumn season, birds migrate to their wintering destinations. For those curious about the number or species of birds migrating on a particular day, <u>Bird Cast</u> provides this information.

Bird migration forecasts predict nocturnal migration three hours after local sunset and are updated every six hours. It is amazing to see how many birds are moving overhead overnight during this season.

The models utilize the Global Forecasting System (GFS) to anticipate suitable migration conditions three hours after local sunset. These maps also display precipitation forecasts (outlined and shown in grayscale).

If you are interested in providing resources for birds as they are migrating, you can find information on feeding birds at <u>Feeder Watch</u> and the importance of reducing light pollution at the <u>Lights Out</u> webpage.



## CONSERVATION@HOME MEMBER SPOTLIGHT LAURA HERTZ

**PEORIA COUNTY** 

I was advised of the adage
"The first year they sleep.
The second year they
creep. The third year they
leap." It has been so!
Laura Hertz

In 2018, I became aware of the importance of native plants after listening to a webinar featuring Doug Tallamy, an entomologist from Dartmouth most known for his books Bringing Nature Home and Nature's Best Hope. He completely changed my thinking about the function of landscaping; rather than focusing solely on aesthetics, plants could be beneficial contributors to the microenvironment of a yard and supply habitat for myriad living things. And still be aesthetically pleasing! Insects and birds are only able to contribute to the food web when they have the food (plants and insects) with which they co-evolved.

So, between the spring of 2019 and the summer of 2023, my husband and I slowly worked to convert much of our turf into native plant beds, and replace ecologically devoid plants with plants that help nature. We now have over 50 species of native flowering plants, shrubs, and trees. We have noticed an increase in the nesting birds and especially an increase in native bees.

I started my endeavor by smothering sections of turf, which is slow but cheap.



After preparing the planting areas, I purchased native plant plugs- little pots with ample roots. At first, the little plant plugs looked so fragile and vulnerable to munching rabbits and mischievous chipmunks. I was advised of the adage "The first year they sleep. The second year they creep. The third year they leap." It has been so!

Since the plants have grown and filled in the space, I no longer have to worry about rabbits or chipmunks decimating plants-there is plenty to share. We completely replaced our terrace grass with native plants, eliminating the need to mow that pesky lawn strip by the curb. Although we still have some non-native plants in the yard, they are vastly outnumbered by plants that provide food, nectar, and habitat for local and migrating wildlife. Native plants are quite low-maintenance, suited as they are to dry, hot summers. They do not require fertilizer and I almost never water any of it.

When I learned about the Conservation @Home initiative, I felt pretty confident that our little quarter-acre would be a contender.

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#### CONSERVATION@HOME MEMBER SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED.....



In addition to the many plants, my husband is diligent with keeping the bird bath and bird feeders filled. We have a compost pile. I try to leave as much plant material on site as possible. We planted a red oak, serviceberry trees, and a redbud. I've added some fallen logs for the insects, and leave some bare ground for bees to nest. In the winter, the dried heads of the rattlesnake master and coneflower catch the snow like an icy gumdrop, and the hollow stems of the sedum and bluestem are left to house overwintering insects. I am proud to have the Conservation@Home sign displayed prominently!

#### **Future goals**

There are still improvements to make and knowledge to acquire. I'd like to replace two privacy burning bushes with chokeberry. I'd like to smother more grass and replace it with sedges or flowers. I want to add a sassafras tree. I'd like to learn more about which plants are hosting which insects and birds. The recently released book The Gardener's Guide to Prairie Plants (Diboll & Cox) and Pollinators of Native Plants (Holm) are waiting on the shelf for me to study them intensely. I wish to thank Pat Alexander for bringing me into the fold of her native gardens and sharing many plants with me. I'm paying it forward.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

#### **MARK YOUR CALENDAR**



- September 17, 2024, 5:30 pm: Log Room, <u>Wildlife Prairie Park</u>, 3826 N Taylor Rd, Hanna City Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle will share information about Invasive Species and Wild Spotter. Social time begins at 5:30 pm, program starts at 6 pm.
- September 24, 2024 from 5 to 7 pm Tazewell County Farm Bureau Building 1505 Valle Vista,
  Pekin. Come to the Conservation@Home Plant/Seed Swap. Bring seeds and plants and take
  home new seeds and plants. Remember best practices to prevent the spread of invasive
  species which include washing roots and repotting in potting soil. Come anytime to share or stay
  entire time to share ideas with others.
- December 10, 2024, 5:30 pm: Wallace Park 250 S Ave D, Canton. End of the Year Gathering.
   A time to enjoy each other's company and celebrate all of the accomplishments and experiences of 2024.



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